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MONTANA FEDERAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICAL SERVICE

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MONTANA PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS FOR 1953

On March 1 Montana farmers expressed their intentions to seed 4,671,000 acres to principal crops this spring, compared with plantings of 4,535,000 acres in 1952. These early plans are dependent, to a large extent, upon the survival of the winter wheat crop. If they are carried out, plantings of corn, spring wheat, barley, dry beans, sugar beets and potatoes will be larger and only partially offset by smaller acreages of oats, flaxseed and dry peas. Additional seedings of spring wheat and other grain crops are likely if the abandonment of winter wheat acreage exceeds current appraisals.

Plantings for individual crops may also be altered by spring weather conditions, soil moisture supplies at time of seeding and also upon the potential labor supply.

Subsoil moisture reserves are short in many sections of Central and Eastern Montana and extremely short in several eastern counties. Heavy spring precipitation is needed in these areas for crop production, or else some additional cropland may be summer fallowed. The above average precipitation for January and February is encouraging and should facilitate seed bed preparation which has already started. It now appears that the seeding of crops may come earlier than for the past several years. Irrigation water supplies are generally adequate but not plentiful in some areas.

Wheat: Farmers intend to seed 4,671,000 acres of spring wheat in 1953, or 3 percent over last year's plantings of 4,535,000 acres. Last fall 1,610,000 acres were seeded to winter wheat. Adding this to expected spring wheat seedings, it totals 6,281,000 acres of all wheat. This compares with the gross seedings of 6,230,000 acres for the 1952 crop. Although it is too early to appraise the survival of the winter wheat crop, prospects look much better now than they did last fall. The mild winter and the warm weather of January and early February sprouted considerable wheat and some of this is expected to come through. Most of the acreage to be abandoned will be reseeded to spring wheat.

Feed Grains: Feed grains and hay are currently in good supply as a result of the mild, open winter. Plantings of barley are expected to be 6 percent larger, 550,000 acres; corn 10 percent larger, 176,000 acres, but oats seedings reduced 4 percent to 525,000 acres. The aggregate for these crops totals 1,251,000 acres, compared with 1,226,000 acres in 1952. These acreages are needed to maintain livestock numbers at current high levels.

Other Crops: Sharp increases are indicated for dry beans, sugar beets and potatoes. The dry bean acreage of 9,000 is 50 percent greater than the 6,000 acres in 1952. Prospective sugar beet plantings of 49,000 acres is 10,000 acres above last year and potato plantings of 12,000 acres compares with 10,700 acres in 1952. The flaxseed acreage of 13,000 and dry peas of 4,000 acres are each 1,000 acres less than the 1952 plantings. Farmers and ranchers intend to cut 2,275,000 acres of hay, or 6 percent less than the 2,420,000 harvested last year. A larger than usual acreage of grains were cut for hay in 1952 because of drought in eastern counties.

MONTANA: PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS FOR 1953

CROP	AVERAGE 1942 - 51			ACRES PLANTED		
	Acres	Yield per Pl. Acre		1952	Indicated 1953	1953 as % of 1952
	Planted	Amount	Unit	1952	1953	of 1952
	(1,000 Acres)			(1,000 Acres)	(1,000 Acres)	(Percent)
Corn	197	14.8	Bu.	160	176	110
Spring wheat	3,251	14.8	"	4,535	4,671	103
Oats	520	24.1	"	547	525	96
Barley	713	24.2	"	519	550	106
Flaxseed	208	6.2	"	14	13	93
Beans, dry	25	1,287	Lbs.	6	9	150
Peas, dry	25	1,154	"	5	4	80
Sugar beets	71	10.6	Tons	39	49	125
Potatoes	15.4	162	Bu.	10.7	12.0	112
All hay <u>1</u> /.....	2,222	1.15	Tons	2,420	2,275	94

1/Data for hay relates to acres for harvest.

P. J. Creer, Agr. Statistician in Charge
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(Over)

U. S. PROSPECTIVE PLANTINGS, MARCH 1953

Acreages of most spring-planted crops in 1953 will vary only slightly from those of 1952, if farmers' current plans materialize. Most of the changes are increases--sharp only in the case of flax and sorghums. The chief cause of the uncertainty in fulfillment of plans lies in the extent of winter wheat acreage losses. The mild winter has enabled much wheat acreage to hold on precariously but the Great Plains area still faces a critical period. For the 16 crops covered in this report, a total of 271 million acres is indicated, compared with 266.7 million planted in 1952. Spring activities were mostly normal to advanced. Soil moisture ranges from barely adequate to satisfactory in most areas, except the central and southern Great Plains, where surface moisture is only temporarily adequate and subsoil reserves are lacking. Irrigation water supplies will be near normal in the North, tapering to below normal in southern Rocky Mountain areas. Seed supplies are reported generally adequate.

In reporting plans for 1953, it was apparent that many farmers in the Great Plains were faced with a dilemma--their winter wheat still occupied their fields, but because of its precarious condition they had to be ready with a crop to replant the land if the wheat were lost. Cotton acreage is not covered in current reports by farmers. Farmers indicated their plans to hold or increase hay and grassland acreages, particularly in the South. Current plans, subject to change in the uncertain areas, indicate decreases in acreage of corn, durum wheat, all tobacco, barley and peanuts. Large acreage increases over 1952 are indicated for all sorghums, oats and flax, but relatively small increases for other spring wheat, rice, potatoes, sweetpotatoes, soybeans, all hay, sugar beets, dry beans and peas.

A total of 359 million acres of principal crops to be planted or grown appears likely in 1953, allowing for numerous crops not yet surveyed. This would be about 1 percent more than the 354.7 million acre total of 1952 crops, nearly as much as in 1951, and slightly more than the 1942-51 average. The increase over last year is chiefly due to the larger abandoned winter wheat acreage expected to be available for replanting to spring crops.

C R O P	P L A N T E D A C R E A G E S			
	Average	1952	Indicated	1953 as pct.
	1942-51	1952	1953	of 1952
		Thousands		Percent
Corn, all	88,024	82,658	81,764	98.9
All spring wheat	19,302	21,518	21,600	100.4
Durum	2,643	2,306	2,145	93.0
Other spring	16,659	19,212	19,455	101.3
Oats	43,953	42,975	43,777	101.9
Barley	13,487	9,385	9,357	99.7
Flaxseed	4,348	3,450	4,142	120.1
Rice	1,668	2,013	2,119	105.3
Sorghums for all purposes	14,883	12,455	14,666	117.8
Potatoes	2,318	1,417	1,509	106.5
Sweetpotatoes	591	334	367	109.7
Tobacco 1/	1,678	1,776	1,659	93.5
Beans, dry edible	1,918	1,319	1,332	101.0
Peas, dry field	498	228	234	102.6
Soybeans 2/	13,300	15,643	15,862	101.4
Peanuts 2/	3,664	1,969	1,958	99.4
Hay 1/	74,666	74,664	74,859	100.3
Sugar beets	829	720	801	111.2

1/ Acreage harvested. 2/ Grown alone for all purposes.

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